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1850

**STOLEN GOODS:
OR THE GAINS OF OPPRESSION.**

By LE MABBETT.

AND

**COMPARISON OF STOLEN GOODS WITH
SLAVE LABOR PRODUCE.**

By ELIHU BURRITT.

*"I call the difference in the price of slave and free labor
goods a BRIBE.—Let every honest man spurn the BRIBE."*

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Some of our friends seem to think the term *Stolen Goods*, applied to the products of slavelabor, rather harsh, besides being hardly correct.

Let us inquire whether there can be any propriety of a qualified expression of terms significant of the greatest wrong and outrage of which we have any knowledge.

We may, perhaps, attach more or less censure upon the community with some propriety. We may properly seek to remove the cause that the effect may cease, and contend that these crimes would not exist if men were rightly educated. We might with some truth declare that no man injures his fellow merely for the sake of doing it, and that if temptation to sin was entirely removed sin would no more abound. All this may be true. But there is no good reason why the various crimes should not be called by their proper names: man-stealing, *man-stealing*; murder, *murder*; war, a system of wholesale murder; and slavery, "the sum of all villainies." I need not here stop to prove what every reader of the *Non-Slaveholder* will admit,—that the claim of the Slaveholder upon his victim is an unjust claim; and that his having paid a certain amount of money for his slave, no more entitles him to ownership than my having paid for a stolen horse, entitles me to the ownership of that horse.

A person may be deceived and come in possession of stolen property and be innocent: but the moment that he comes to the knowledge of the fact, or purposely avoids

information that will lead to such knowledge, that moment guilt fastens upon him.

The slaveholder, then, having no other than a stolen right to the slave, it follows that the avails of slave labor are none the less stolen, and consequently the consumer of such product is accessory to man-stealing. Slave-labor goods and stolen goods are synonymous terms. If there is any difference in the crime of partaking of such goods the greater guilt rests upon the person who knowingly participates in slave-products.

For when a horse or watch is stolen, the rightful owner is at liberty to earn and own other property, self-ownership not being destroyed. Not so in the case of the poor slave. In view of all the injury and violence suffered by our poor degraded brother, it is difficult to find language too harsh properly to express a single idea of its enormity. What then can be said of that professor of the Christian religion using the product of slave labor and refusing to listen to any information that is likely to fasten conviction upon his mind? Jesus did not hesitate to call such pretensions the *basest hypocrisy*. Stolen goods are generally afforded for a less price than those obtained honestly. So slave labor cotton, sugar, molasses, &c., are sold for a less price than such articles grown and manufactured by free or paid labor. The difference is a bribe to him who will purchase the cheapest goods, *asking no questions for conscience-sake*.

Believing as I do upon the subject under consideration I must be allowed to call things by their names. If there is any other term that will as briefly and yet more correctly express the character of slave products than *stolen goods*, why then I am willing to make use of such a term. Perhaps *gain of oppression* would be more correct and equally expressive of their character. I called the difference in the price of slave and free labor products, a *bribe*. Is it not so? For who would not have a preference at the same price? Let every honest man *spurn the bribe*.

COMPARISON OF STOLEN GOODS WITH SLAVE LABOR PRODUCE.

Many conscientious persons have accustomed themselves to compare the produce of the poor slave's toil with *stolen goods*. And perhaps they think they sufficiently describe the guilt of the former by this comparison. But

if they will examine the moral character of the articles thus compared they will find but few features of resemblance. Put the worst face of iniquity end wrong upon "stolen goods" that they will bear, and it will show none of the deep, red lineaments of sin that mark the products of the slave's toil. Let us place side by side before us a box of slave-labor sugar and a bale of stolen goods, and apply the barometer of justice and humanity to both. Here is a bale of stolen goods exposed for sale in Boston. It contains a variety of articles stolen by some professional burglar from ten or twenty houses in Worcester. Here are silver spoons, pocket handkerchiefs, Watches, jewelry, several pieces of lace, broad-cloth coats, umbrellas, parasols, reticules, golden-headed canes, snuff-boxes, and the like. These thefts the burglar perpetrated with the aid of false keys and other contrivances, by which he entered houses and shops, and made off with valuable articles, which he could carry under his cloak or in his coat pockets. Perhaps he never entered the same house twice, for fear of detection. He always left the inmates in possession of all the necessities of life, and all the luxuries which he could not carry off without noise or inconvenience in his flight. The robbery being confined to these lighter articles, in some cases may not be discovered for several days after its perpetration; but whenever that discovery is made the whole community is aroused and incensed at the burglarious deed. The authorities are on the alert; policemen and other agents of justice institute a sharp-eyed search for the stolen goods. The robbed family feel assured that all the laws of the land and all the sympathy of public sentiment are on their side; and, if the articles are never restored to them, their loss will not be irreparable, nor much abridge their happiness.

Now let us turn to the box of slave sugar. It is "stolen goods!" says the abolitionist. Aye, but it is far worse than stolen goods. Let us examine the circumstances of this theft. This box of sugar, ladies and gentlemen, is the produce of a slave's labor for three hundred days of hopeless toil. Every one of these three hundred mornings, the slave driver enters that poor man's hut, not with a false key like a burglar, but with the crack of the whip, and like a jailor, and stole all his hopes and toil for the day. There are three hundred separate acts of robbery in this box of

sugar, and perpetrated upon one helpless human being. The slave holder burglar has not left him a thing he can call his own ; he has robbed him of every shred of hope. He has robbed him of his humanity ; he has despoiled him of all the hopes that belongs to the human heart ; he has cut him down to the level of the beast, and bound, and beat him, and ground him to despair in his house of bondage. Take twelve of these boxes of sugar and you have the market value of a slave's life—the sum total of all he leaves behind him when he sinks into the grave—the entire produce of his earthly existence. He first opened his eyes upon the world among thieves ; and thieves followed him through every lane of life, and down to the very sides of the grave, and robbed him and wounded him at every step of the way ; and sent his broken spirit into the invisible world with no patrimony but the bleeding record of its misery. Oh, who that has a heart to comprehend the destinies of a human soul ; to conceive its capacity of hope and despair, of joy and sorrow, in this life and the life to come, can rank such robbery as this with the guilt of mere *stolen goods* ! A stolen watch stands merely for itself—perhaps for one individual act of burglary. Perhaps it was the only thing taken of ten thousand left to its owner ; and perhaps it is the last thing of value which he will ever lose by robbery. But look at this pound of sugar ! It is the evidence and index of a cold-blooded robbery perpetrated upon a fellow being every morning, noon, and night, from the first moment he opened his eyes in this life to the moment he closed them in the grave. All the value of his humanity during his earthly existence has been reduced to the production of so many pounds of sugar, and every one of these items of his existence has been stolen, basely stolen. This pound of sugar before us, then, stands the guilty evidence of one continuous theft—awful thought !—perhaps a theft that not only took from a human brother all in this world that could raise him above the level of the brute in the estimation of his kind, but which beggared his soul in the life to come.

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